

The Random Jottings of Donald Jay from Nelson in Pendle.

THE BYRELAWS OF EXTWISELL.

In days of old, on Extwistle Moor, Shepherds and farmers sought to explore, A way to govern their sheep and their flock, To uphold order on the grazing rock.
With John Parker and John Towneley's aid, They devised a code, rules were made, To guide their actions, to keep them in line, And ensure harmony for woolly and kine.
First, four Byrelaw men were chosen with care, To watch over the township, their duty to bear. No townsman could take a beast, sheep, or horse, Unless in need, a livelihood's source.

For those who dared to cut thorns in Swindean, A penalty awaited, two shillings and fourteen, Staving the thrones brought a lesser price, One shilling would suffice, not quite as precise.

Slate and lime, the goods of the town, Should not be sold, or else a frown, A fine for each waineload, twelve pence high, To deter those who sought profit from the sky.
Strayed goods impounded, their owners must pay, For horses and mares, sixpence they'd lay, Horned beasts, save sheep, fourpence to meet, And for each sheep, a single penny, sweet.

Foulde breaks incurred a heavier cost, Six shillings and eightpence, a price not lost, Serving men limited to a flock of ten, Without Byrelaw-men's consent, no more, amen.
Ring yards, a necessity in their decree, By the fifteenth of March, they must surely be, Else a fine of two shillings and fourteen, To urge timely action, to keep fields serene.
From the Nativity feast to September's end, No mowing, no shearing, no harvest to tend, For each violation, a fine of two shillings, To teach them to honor those seasonal billings.

Neighborly disputes, a cause for concern, If found guilty, payment they'd soon learn, Three shillings and fourteen pence as the fee, To discourage ill deeds, to foster unity.
Breaking hedges, cutting wood without right, A fine of two shillings and fourteen, they'd cite, To safeguard the land, its boundaries secure, To preserve the landscape, both gentle and pure.

These were the bylaws of Extwistle's past, A testament to order, a harmony to cast, Through shepherd's care and farmer's hand, They sought a balance, in this timeless land.

By Donald Jay